THE EYE

SPRING 2019
VOLUME 9
ISSUE 4

FREE

COVER BY SHANNON SPERLING

LOOK AT THIS!

SOME LETTERS FROM YOUR FRIENDS

DEAR ALL,

THIS IS IT! THE LAST ISSUE FOR NOW 'TIL FALL.

IT HAS BEEN A WILD RIDE.

AS YOUR EDITOR, I WANTED TO THANK EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN A PART OF MAKING THE EYE POSSIBLE FOR THIS PAST YEAR SINCE I TOOK IT OVER.

THESE 4 ISSUES AHVE BEEN VERY SPECIAL AND I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT SO MANY SECRET TALENTED WRITERS THAT EXIST WITHIN THESE HALLS, AND HOPEFULLY YOU HAVE AS WELL.

I TOOK ON THE EYE AS A WAY TO CREATE A SPACE FOR COLLABORATION, AND FREEDOM TO SHARE IDEAS IN A COMMUNAL WAY, AND TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER IN SHARING THEIR WRITING. I THINK THAT THESE IDEAS HAVE HELD TRUE THROUGH EACH PRINTING THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE.

I WILL BE GRADUATING THIS SEMESTER, AND WANTED TO TAKE THIS SPACE AS AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE EYE NEEDS SOMEONE TO TAKE IT OVER AND CONTINUE FORWARD.

IF YOU AND YOUR PALS ARE INTERESTED IN TAKING OVER THE EYE AS EDITOR(S) FOR THE FALL SEMESTER, PLEASE CONTACT THE ONE AND ONLY LIBRARIAN EXTRORDINAIRE JEFF GUNDERSON.

GOOD LUCK AND LOVE EVERYONE-
SING SONGS TOGETHER!

YOURS,

SOPHIE APPEL

Hello,

Below is a letter on behalf of the graduate student cohort, we would appreciate it being included in the next issue of the Eye. Feel free to reach out if you require any adjustments be made.

SFAI COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION:

We are calling for community solidarity and action.

The administration is considering renting 30 Fort Mason studio spaces to alumni for an estimated $300-500/month. How will this affect everyone?

Undergraduate honor studios and the painting studios at Fort Mason could potentially cease to exist in the future to make room for the alumni studios.

There is talk that Third-year Dual Degree graduate students will lose their studio, when numerous members of the administration have promised that Dual Degree students will have a studio in their third year.

MA (single-track) students will continue to be overlooked and lose any possibility of gaining a studio.

Simply put, we are all aware of our institution's financial situation. However, this is a short-term solution that emphasizes fast cash over student outcomes. Renting thirty studio spaces to alumni will potentially earn the school $108,000-$180,000 a year. But the Dual Degree program is seeing higher enrollment now more than ever, and retaining the studio in their third year is what draws most students to this unique program. The loss of their tuition will offset whatever rent SFAI accrues from alumni. It also risks raising everybody's tuition to compensate. There is an opportunity for SFAI to capitalize on this unique program, and create a long-term solution to our fiscal situation that attracts scholar-artists from all over. Removing a thinker from their space of making is a direct contradiction to the pedagogy of the Dual Degree program. The two are one in the same.

WHAT WE WANT:

Undergrad studios at Fort Mason to remain

No Alumni in the space that could potentially affect our tight-knit community and create an intimidating power dynamic.

Dual Degree students will retain their studios for ALL THREE YEARS.

MA students are considered for studio space access.

We need to come together as a community and find a long-term solution that prioritizes the needs of the student body. Fort Mason exists FOR and BECAUSE of us. Fort Mason is a community space, a safe space, for the student body. Pushing undergraduate studios and 3rd year Dual Degree studios out in favor of minor profit from rent is absurd. This is an unsustainable path for an Institute that is supposed to "create an environment of curiosity and discovery in which students have the freedom, and courage, to take risks."

ANY DECISION THAT HARMS UNDERGRADUATES' OR GRADUATES' ABILITIES TO LEARN AND CREATE FREELY HARMS ALL OF US.

To quote the students protesting tuition hikes at Calarts, "You are nothing without us." You (the institution) have a decision to make. Put it this way: by removing studio access, SFAI is effectively devaluing our tuitions and nullifying Gordon Knox's tuition freeze. Our current tuitions will go toward less.

The graduates strongly urge ALL students to share their opinions on the matter in the form of a letter addressed to Gordon Knox, Heather Hickman Holland, Yasmin Lambie-Simpson, and/or Jennifer Rissler.

Reach out to your professors, faculty chairs, fellow students, prospective students and help get the word out.

-The Graduate Student Cohort

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHING OF STUDENT COLLECTIVE AND EVENTS

This past week, students from all majors came together to participate in a multi-media event: BRINK: SFAI PILOT. Nineteen artists ranging from sound art, to painting, to installation, to ceramics, printmaking, sculpture and drawing found themselves in the New Genre's department on March 30th. The evening was filled with lively conversation, good food, and lots fun.

Later that week, a collective was founded. The democratic entities mission is simple: Connect emerging artists of all kinds to the community, in a friendly, open, affordable manner. The BRINK COLLECTIVE is in its infancy, but don't underestimate it. Jason Brawdy, a BRINK member and founder, is showing a series of photographs in Still Lights Gallery this week titled: Smothered City. Check it out!

Additionally, Founder Sebastian Petersen is hosting a small BRINK opening event this Thursday the 11th, at 6:30-9pm at the West Wall Gallery. TRACE OF MINDS gives visitors a Glimpse of how artists collect, document, sort, test and experiment with their mediums. The show will be running until April 21st.

If you're interested in BRINK and have any questions, email us here:

brnkcollective@gmail.com

Our website is in the works, but is up and running here:

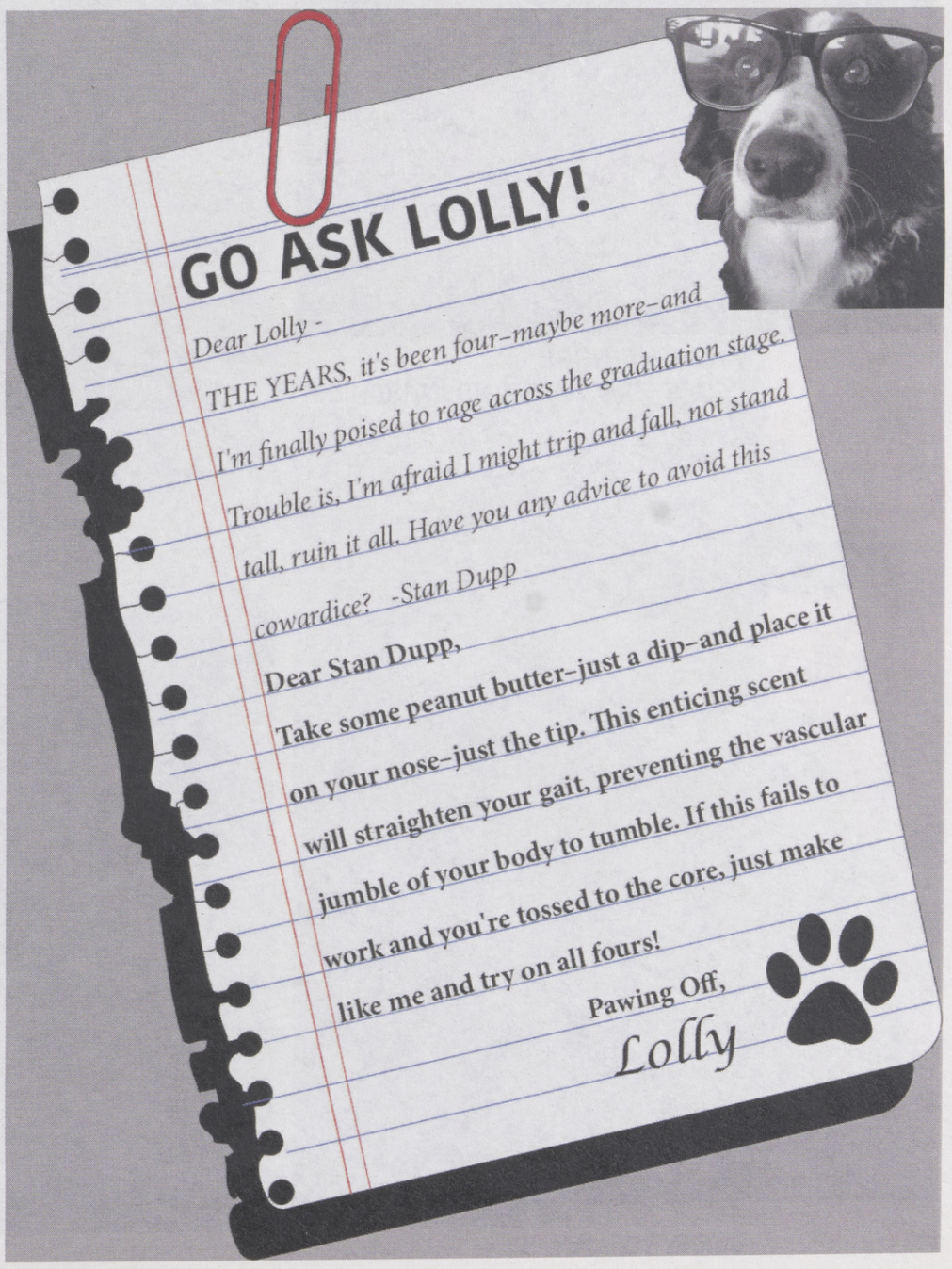
https://brink.video.blog/

Social media and gallery images from the shows will be up and running soon.

Cheers!

Sebastian Petersen

KRISTIN NELSON


GO ASK LOLLY!
Dear Lolly -
THE YEARS, it's been four–maybe more–and I'm finally poised to rage across the graduation stage. Trouble is, I'm afraid I might trip and fall, not stand tall, ruin it all. Have you any advice to avoid this cowardice? -Stan Dupp
Dear Stan Dupp,
Take some peanut butter–just a dip–and place it on your nose–just the tip. This enticing scent will straighten your gait, preventing the vascular jumble of your body to tumble. If this fails to work and you're tossed to the core, just make like me and try on all fours!
Pawing Off,
Lolly

↘ → ↓

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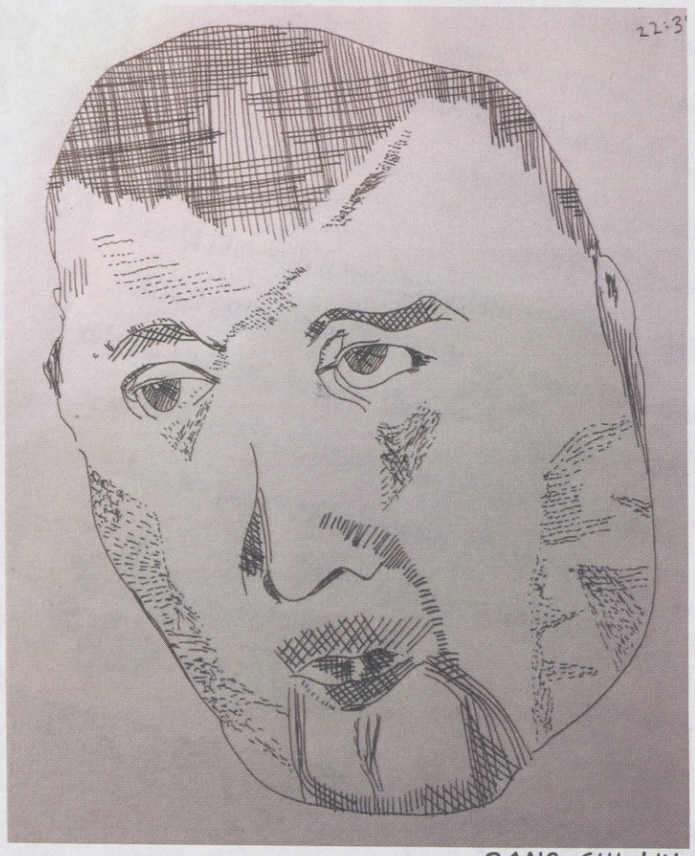
COLLEEN DONOVAN

words: empathize we are all floating in space

BREA WEINREB
"CUPS FOR DAVID WOJNAROWICZ"



SANG CHI LIU

Morning Times

You use to wake up
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Blame me for this person
al was not.
Being abused is something
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Being a abuser will
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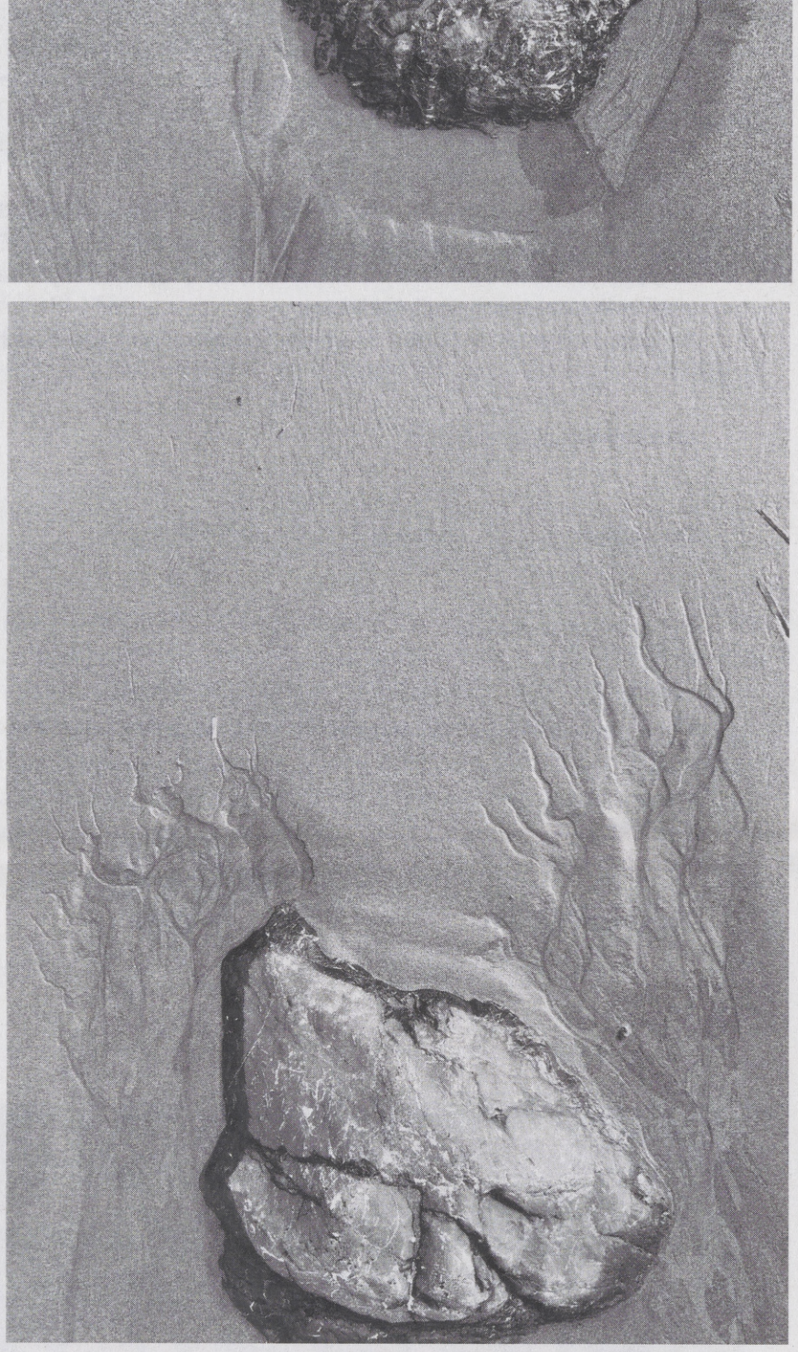
That was us.

Sophia Cook



BOBBY SINGER
"REFUGE: 1,2,3"

"in place"

i cannot build you out of bricks
when you are hot asphalt on a windy day
without a jacket
leafless trees
afraid to love anything that will outlive
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beginning,
the most mysterious of losses

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that is all there is

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feeling like
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i wonder if you'd care if my brain did actually combust.

i always think about the night we met, how everything just seemed to be going wrong and how you thought it would be a kindness to spare me from the disasters of that evening. i'm so glad i didn't leave when you had a flat tire and a flat tongue.

there's been a constant back and forth between you and i. tonight, i really am wondering how we got to this point. i did not foresee this lasting as long as it did but i'm so glad that you're still here, i'm glad that you want to stick around for whatever reason.

please stick around for a while, being with you feels like the sun has finally come out when it's been hiding for so long.

your eyes are the most magical things i have ever seen. when you look me in the eyes you are doing me a kindness, you don't even realize it.

i am so glad we made it into the spring, there's something so fresh and new about us now. i hope we continue to bloom and grow together. i know you could hurt me, i keep anticipating it. you are a rose and i must remember that even the sweetest most beautiful rose has thorns.

i'm glad to see you, holding my heart in between your teeth. please be gentle.

i love seeing you in my apartment, i imprint the image of you lying in my bed on my brain, maybe on my heart.

you can't have dairy, but you'll drink a beer and eat a thin mint.

you and your sister fight and it reminds me of how i fight with my brother.

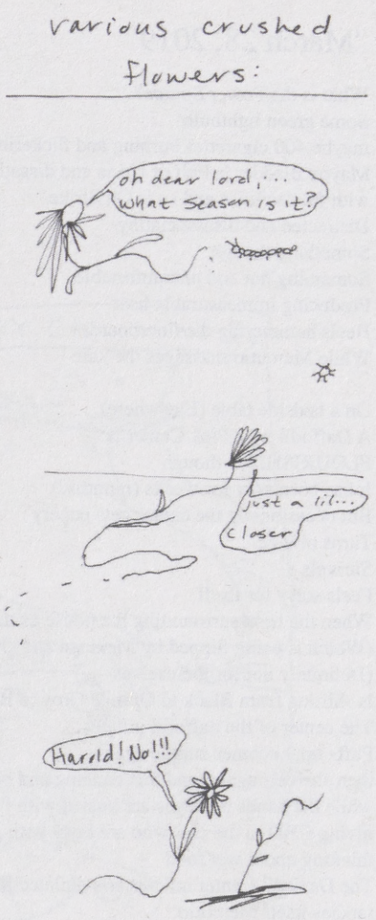
you're a sweet soft boy, i wonder if you're sleeping now as i'm writing this. i wonder if you think i am sweet and soft.

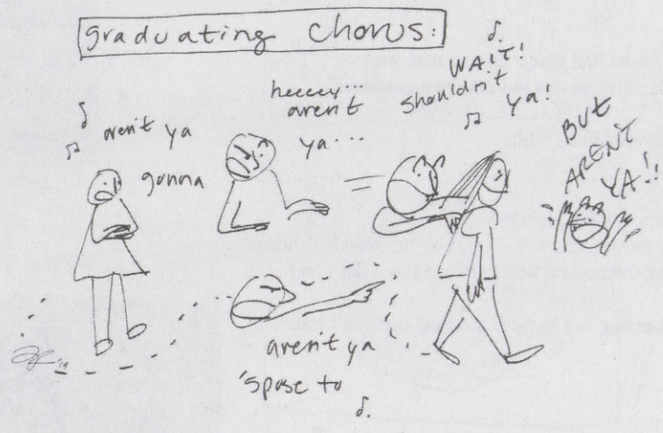
i want to be there for you, you stupid boy. do you even deserve that? time will only tell. thank you for not letting me push and kick you out of my life.

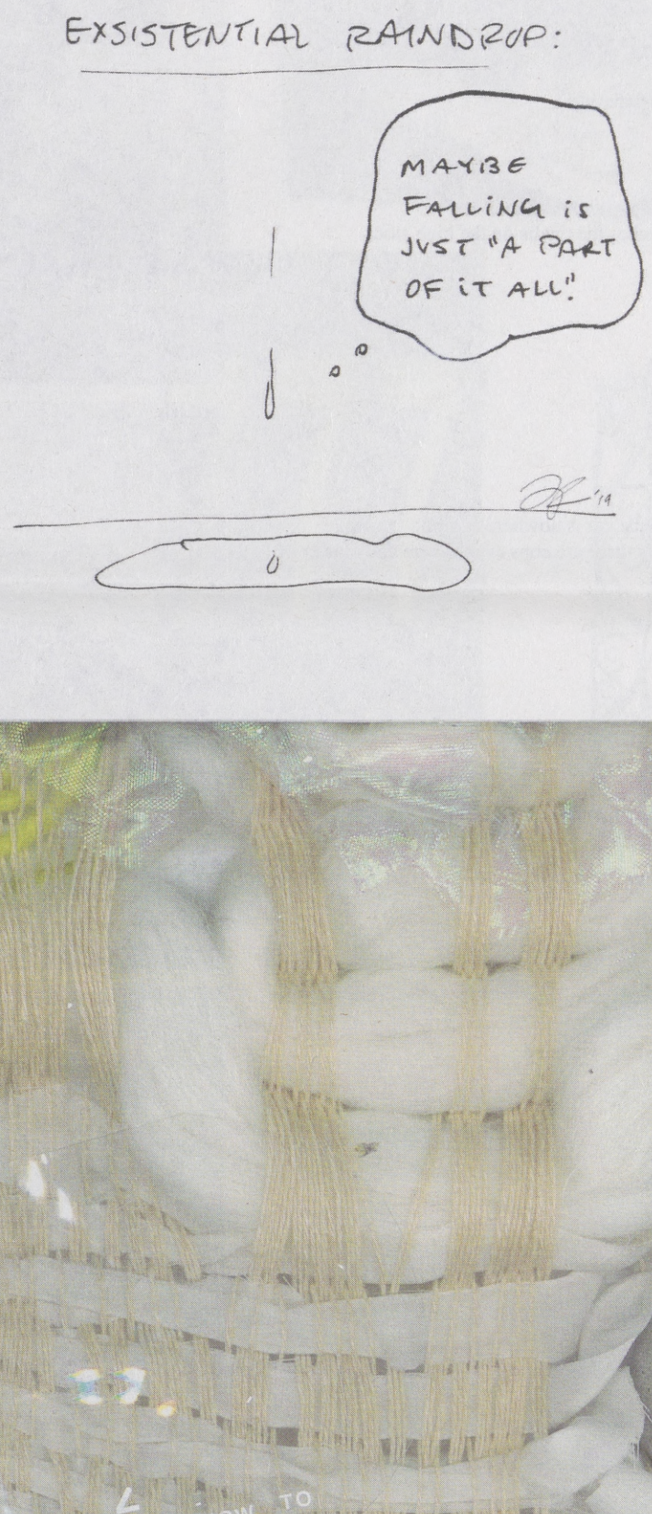
i would be mortified if you ever read this because i am so far out at sea and there is no sign of rescue, no gentle tide to pull me back in and say " hey. it's okay you're back on land and you are not alone."

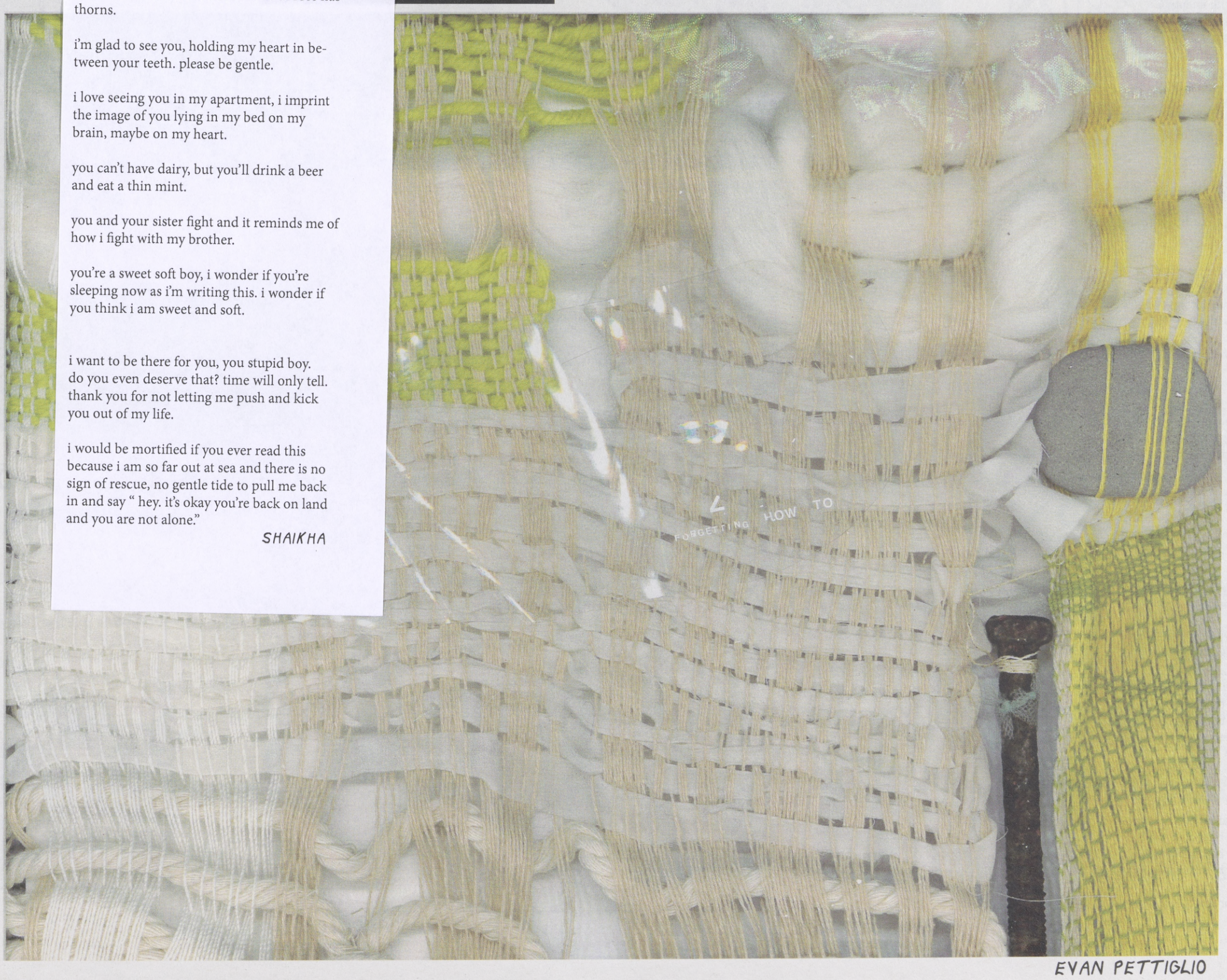
SHAIKHA

COMICS BY FAITH RAWSON









EVAN PETTIGLIO

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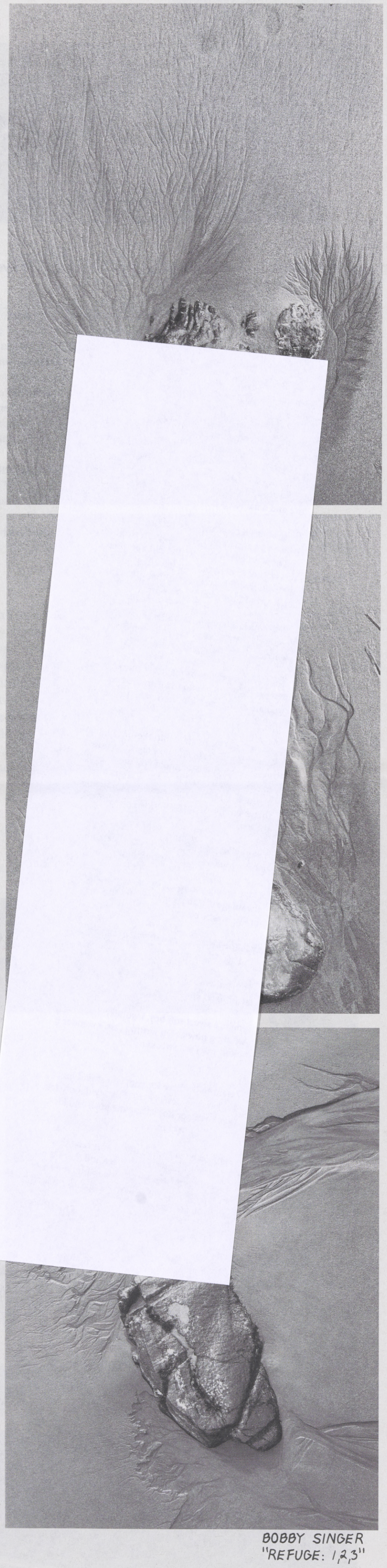

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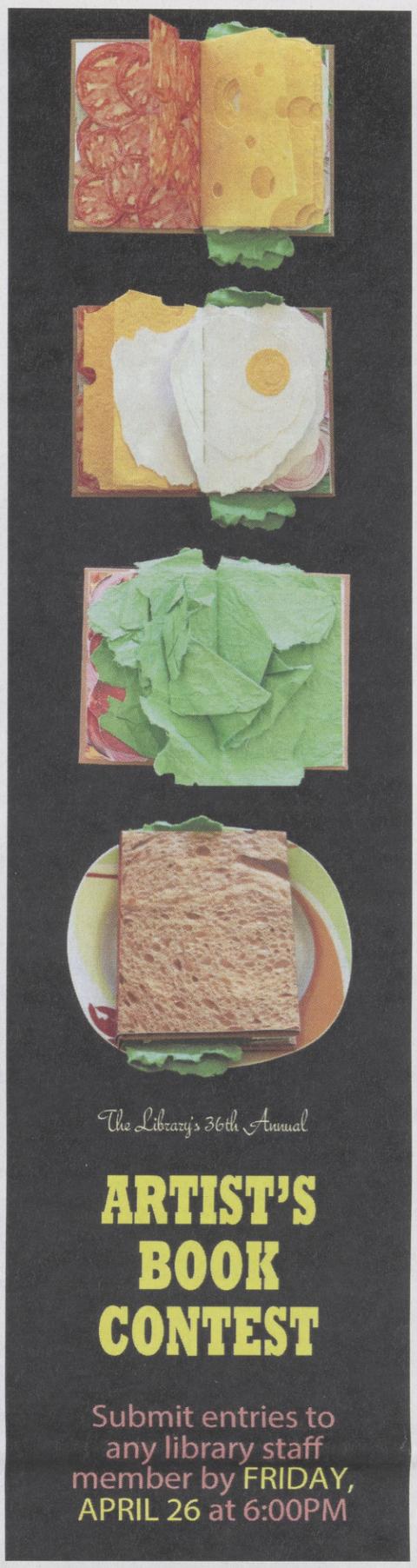
REL ROBINSON

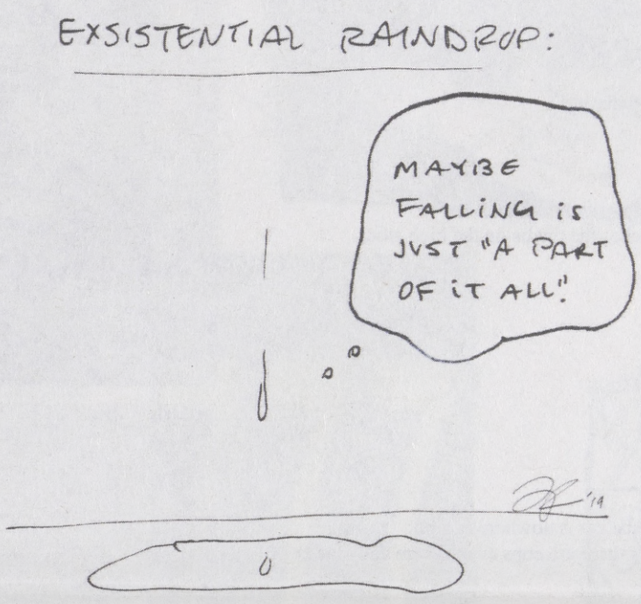


The Library's 36th Annual

ARTIST'S BOOK CONTEST

Submit entries to any library staff member by FRIDAY, APRIL 26 at 6:00PM

COMICS BY FAITH RAWSON



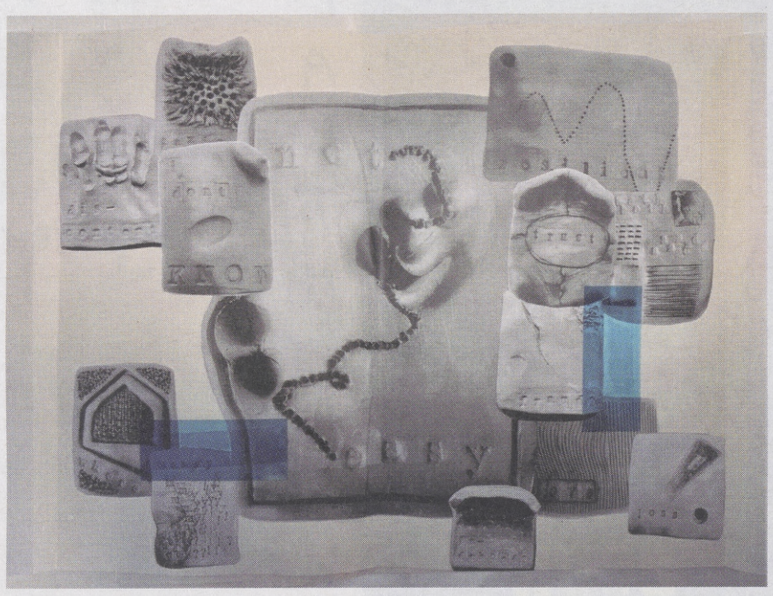
EVAN PETTIGLIO

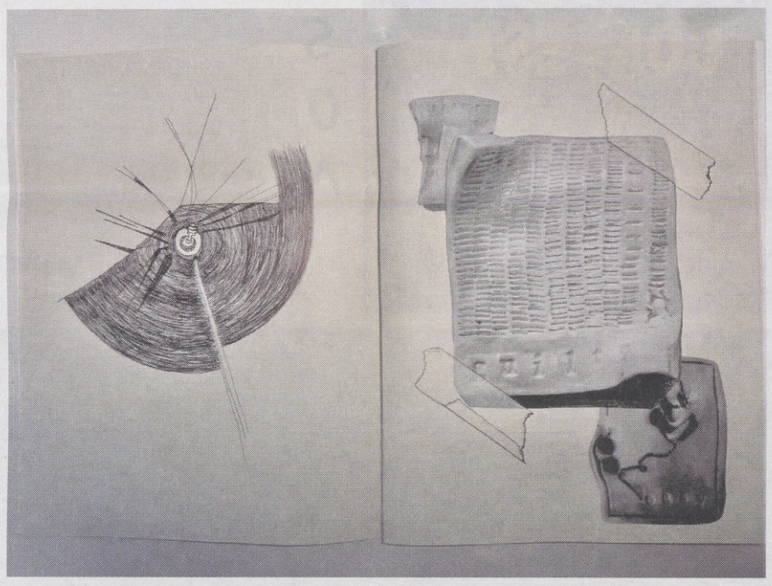
"March 28, 2019"

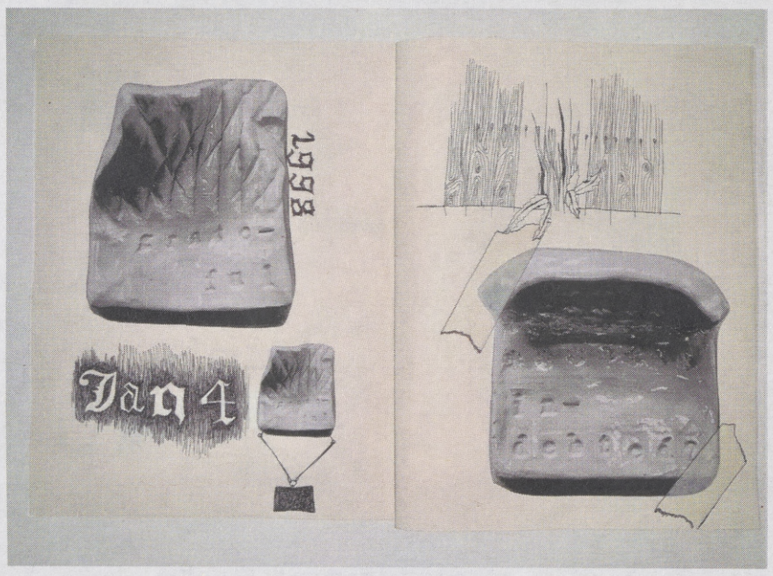
What is the Power Source?
Some green lightbulb
maybe 400 cigarettes burning and flickering and asking and twinkling in a confined space
Maybe Bladder is Full of Urine and dissatisfied
with the facilities and so is On Strike
Distracted and disassociating
Something though
Something hot and uncomfortable
Producing immeasurable heat
Heels hammering the floorboards
While Mercutio massages the kale

On a bedside table (Elsewhere)
A Daffodil with Pink Center is
FLOURISHING though
It has been now for weeks (months?)
But occasionally the center gets papery
Turns orange
Shrivels
Feels sorry for itself
When the light surrounding the house as the other house and house next to that one
(Which is being flipped by Mexican and Guatemalan contractors but not for themselves
(Definitely not for themselves
is shifting from Black to Orange Grey to Bluish before it turns white
The center of the daffodil inflates,
Puffs up, becomes supple again
then shrivels again (and this dancing and pacing happens for a while
while the hands and eyes are busied with fumbling movements around snooze buttons, bedsheets,
giving CBD to the cats who are busy with grooming themselves and thinking about fleas and
thinking about wet food
The Daffodil Center inflates and deflated like a paper bag in a hyperventilating cartoon's hands
fancies itself Mercutio
No
Tybalt
No
Romeo
No Juliet
No
Friar Lawrence maybe
Nurse?
Its Center is inflating and deflating and inflating and deflating
It's beautiful
It's tired
It's tired
It's beautiful again
It has to settle on something by the time the light reaches the oxalis on the high stool
And so it settles on the puffy appearance
Blushing
Strong
Unreasonable maybe
And so Power Source may be Spite
Im addition to things that come more naturally
Daffodil with Pink Center thinks about the future
Thinks about the past
Feels trapped in it
Goes back to thinking about the future
Dreams of being left behind at an Asian Market and the car is nowhere in sight
And they open lyft and on the map instead of driver's there are cops everywhere and cluster of
people (6 or 7 at a time
beating each other bloody
So they speedwalk
down the sidewalk
Towards the train station they hope is there
Because walking with intention
(Even if you're lost
Is better than walking without it
Especially if you're lost
And a strange man grabs you by the backpack and when you turn to face him
and speak to him with more bass in your voice than usual
He grabs your hand
and you feel it there
in yours
And you slide your hand around his and you are going to break the pinky
And you wake up as not a Daffodil but as something else
with your lover's pinky in your hand
ready to break it
Put this in the same category as kissing the back of your own hand
in all the confidence of sleep
Lay there a moment
Think about the Power Source
Maybe it's the kerosene heater
Or maybe it's another kerosene heater far away from here
Maybe it's the wood stove
Or the microwave
Or the motorcycle battery
Or copper pipes
Or cow shit
Or sheeps wool
Think about the future
About how short your babies would be
Think of the immediate past
A cool bathtub
A warm bathtub
Endothermic
Exothermic
Both are both
When something's matter looks like other things
it's luxury
A seashell shaped pillow with terry cloth texture and suction cups
Think about shivering
Think about love
Take passionflower tincture
Boil water for passionflower tea
Forget about the water
Drink half a beer in 45 minutes
Leave half of it by the futon
Leave half of it on the floor
Think about the good types of hereditary
Long eyelashes
Sporty type
Sensitive skin
Nickel allergies
Think about the Daffodil on the bedside table repeating:
"Either I or you or both must die"
"Either I or you or both must die"
"Either I or you or both must die"
And then wilt
And then spring forward.

DIANNA SETTLES

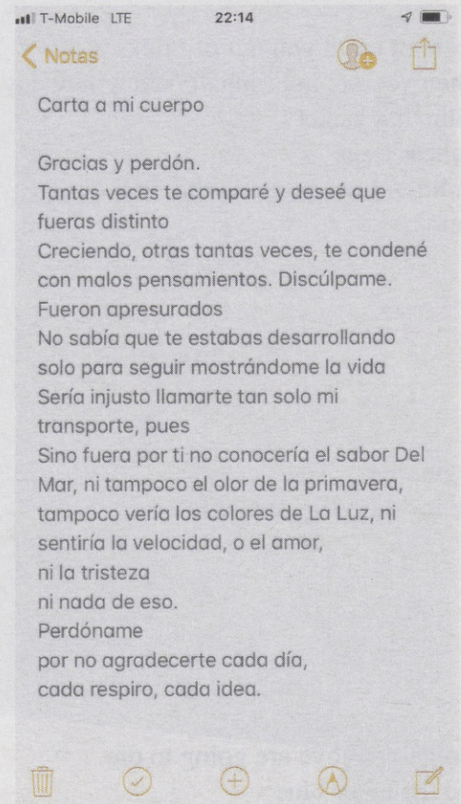






FINN GRACE LI

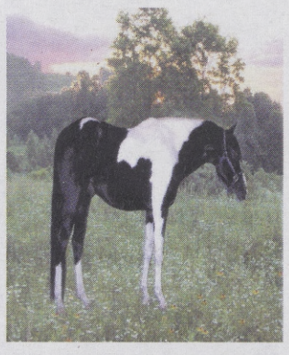
FREDI LOPEZ
"GUGGENHEIM"

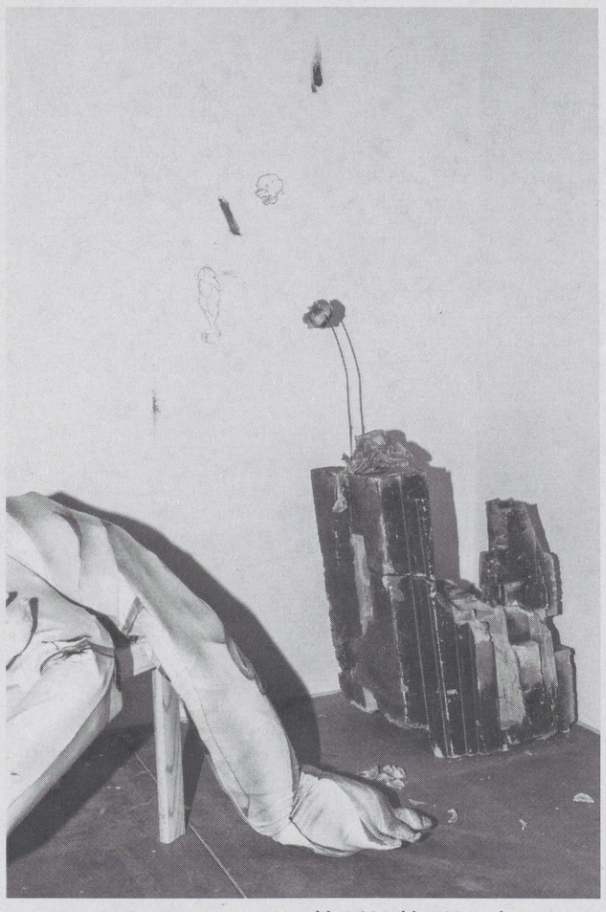

T-Mobile LTE
22:14
Notas
Carta a mi cuerpo
Gracias y perdón.
Tantas veces te comparé y deseé que
fueras distinto
Creciendo, otras tantas veces, te condené
con malos pensamientos. Discúlpame.
Fueron apresurados
No sabía que te estabas desarrollando
solo para seguir mostrándome la vida
Sería injusto llamarte tan solo mi
transporte, pues
Sino fuera por ti no conocería el sabor Del
Mar, ni tampoco el olor de la primavera,
tampoco vería los colores de La Luz, ni
sentiría la velocidad, o el amor,
ni la tristeza
ni nada de eso.
Perdóname
por no agradecerte cada día,
cada respiro, cada idea.

FLOPI (FLORENCIA MONTEFALCONE)

FROM THE ARCHIVE

1969 SFAI PARTY FOR THE NEW BUILDING





MENGMENG LU
"SAMI'S SPECIAL"
2019

Simple Bread Recipe

Here's what I can remember
about making a dense loaf of bread
that isn't very good.
First step:

You need to go to the store and buy flour,
you can buy any flour you want. Wheat
flour, all purpose white flour, whatever kind
you like.
You'll also need yeast and salt.

Those are all the ingredients you need to make
this bread.
So, first step; go to the store
go down the aisle you normally would for
baking goods
find flour, yeast (which should be there as well),
and then
the spices section is where you'll find the salt.

Then, after the store you'll go home and hope-
fully will
have a big glass mixing bowl, a spatula, and a
measuring cup.

Second step:

Get one cup of warm water, the water should be
around 98 degrees
fahrenheit.

What you'll do is get the water into the bowl,
while adding one tablespoon
salt with one tablespoon yeast.

Once that is mixed add six cups of flour gradu-
ally.
You can mix it with your hands if you'd like.

Ok, now we have made the dough,
it should be rather tan in color.

We let the dough (which you have just made)
rise for three hours
in the bowl, with a towel over the bowl.

Third Step:

Remove towel and
cut a ball from the dough roughly
the size of a large orange

Set oven at 350 degrees fahrenheit,
bake for thirty-five minutes.

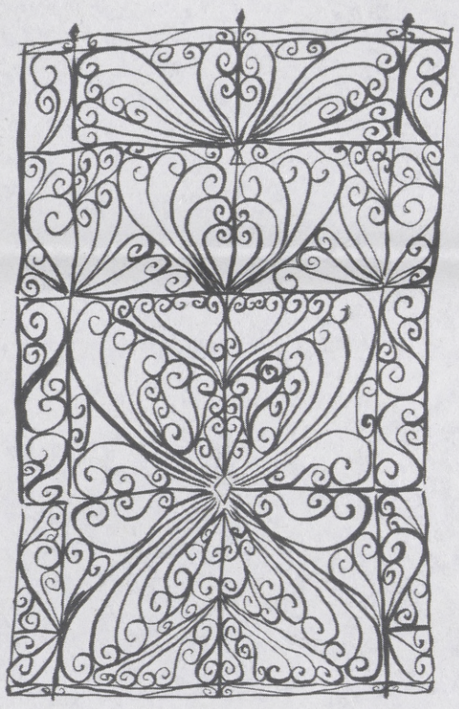
COLE SOLINGER

Zone of Fractional Melting

There is something intricately beautiful and ironic about the zone of fractional melting. Is the point where creation and destruction overlaps, where both terms are simultaneously stripped from all meaning. Like consenting lovers, destruction gives way
to creation and creation to destruction. It's a zone where boundaries are erased, rules are overthrown and there is no longer a race for power. This is a story brought forward for your blind eyes, for your deaf ears and your tasteless buds. A metaphor, for the beauty within your powerless nature and the irony of that same nature being destructive. This is a story to restore the motions that were once broken, like the mechanism of the old clock from your grandma's house. Tic-toc. Tic-Toc. In order to awaken a higher consciousness, I and myself, will attempt to penetrate your mind and imagination, whether you agree or not, like a dagger would slowly penetrate the external skin of your body and rip everything on its way to the deepest accessible point. I want you to drink from the nectar of the gods and taste all the flavors of the world. Like the taste of that last ray of sunshine before the darkness takes over. Like when blue and red become purple. Like the friction of our bodies.
There is irony in how you perceive them, being two different forces, and there is beauty
within the invisibility of their undeniable relation. There is irony in the time needed for this information to reach your brain, and there
is beauty in that same information
subsequently decaying somewhere in a dark corner of that disgusting brain of yours.

@MM

SIDONIE RODDAM

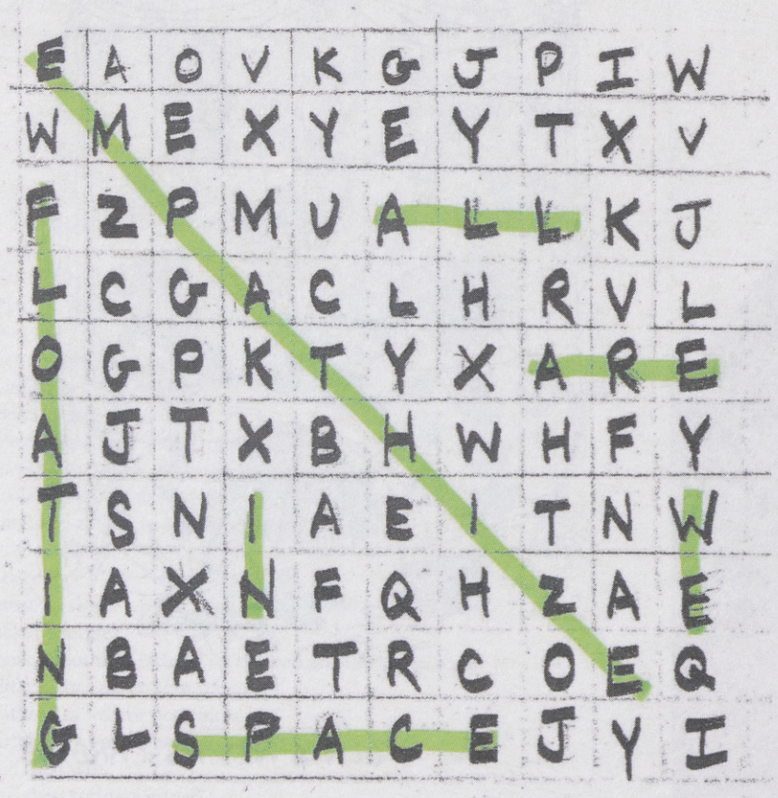


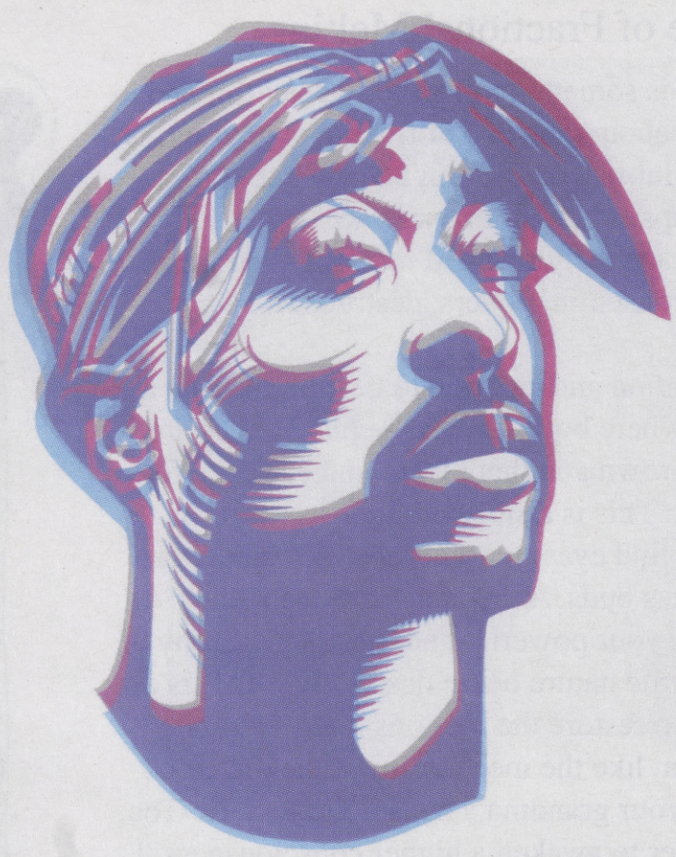
OLIVIA NEVINS-CARBINS

She Keeps Me Sane

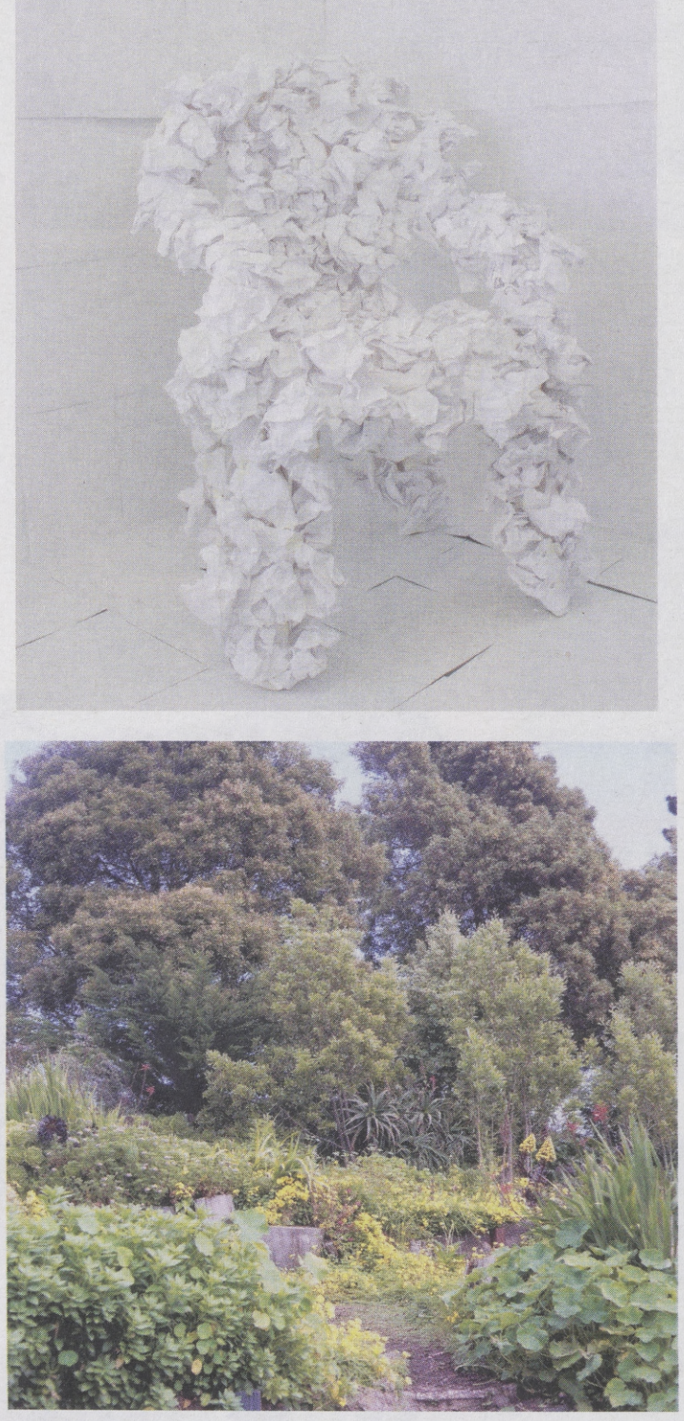
STOP
THIS IS NOT A TRAIL
When you choose to go off trail you cause damage to
fragile open space vegetation and create erosion problems.
Together we can protect this resource.
STOP

ANTHIA HANSEN





APRIL MARTIN



My artistic practice ranges from tackling themes associated with color theory, queerness, artificiality and materiality, as well as commentary on our contemporary consumer culture. I set out to construct narratives that embody what it means to be human and to navigate our current political and social environments. By isolating individual forms, textures, objects and colors, my work plays with the notion that even the most mundane objects can speak to a greater definition of beauty, while inherently challenging how human beings define the word -- especially considering the role social media plays in our contemporary culture. In a society that is dominated by the problematic rhetoric of Donald Trump and social media's increasing chokehold on the general public, my photographs and sculptures are critically thinking about ideas surrounding what is real, and what is, in fact, artificially constructed for mass consumption.

COLLIN POLLARD

E A O V K G J P I W
W M E X Y E Y T X V
F Z P M U A L L K J
L C G A C L H R V L
O G P K T Y X A R E
A J T X B H W H F Y
T S N I A E I T N W
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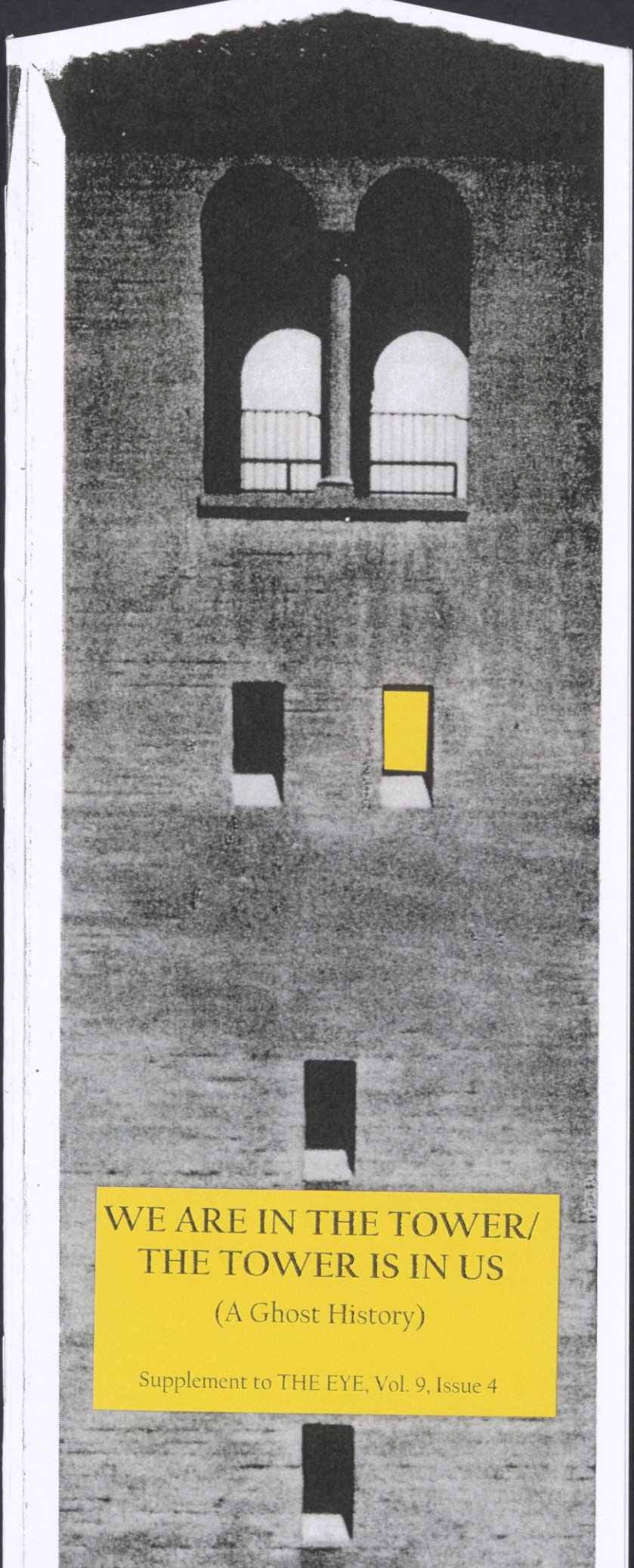
COLLEEN DONOVAN
"PHOTOWALK 2K19"



WE ARE IN THE TOWER/ THE TOWER IS IN US

(A Ghost History)

Supplement to THE EYE, Vol. 9, Issue 4

WE ARE IN THE TOWER/THE TOWER IS IN US

(A Ghost History)

How soon after a building is constructed is its first ghost likely to move in? Lately I've been wondering how far back SFAI's ghost stories go, and while you don't tend to think of a brand new building as haunted, the tower must have seemed perfect for it from day one, with its long, winding staircase (13 steps up to most of the landings!) and three cold, dark, concrete rooms with their high ceilings and narrow windows. So far my not-very-exhaustive research hasn't led to anything definitive, but what does seem clear is that a uniquely strong and early advocate for the presence of a tower ghost was a painter named Bill Morehouse, a student in the late 1940s who made some cash on the side doing odd jobs for the school and serving as its night watchman. Articles about SFAI's ghost have shown up in various local publications over the years, and Morehouse features prominently in pretty much all of them, at one point even arranging for a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter to spend a night alone in the tower in order to experience the ghost for himself![1] (He did not.) Apparently Morehouse actually *lived* in the tower off and on during this time, initially while working on outfitting one of its rooms as living quarters for the school's janitor,[2] and purports to have

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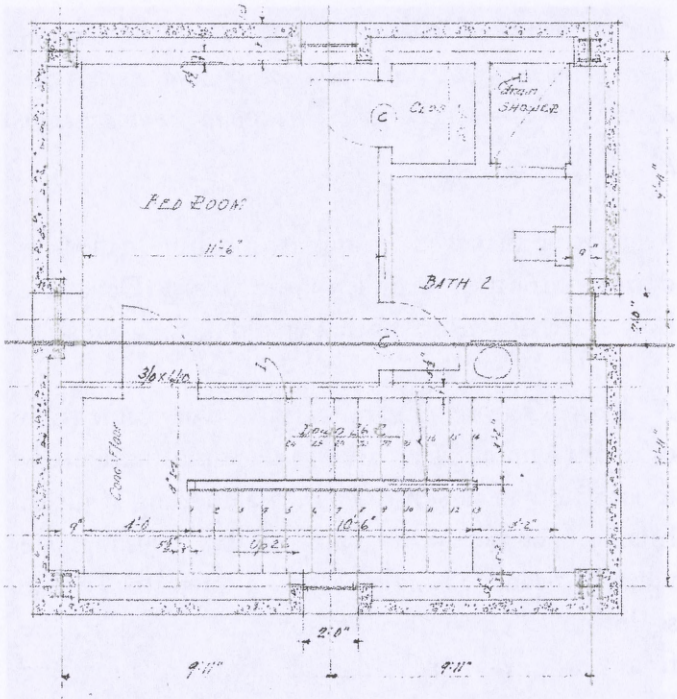
[1] Wallace, Dean. "A Lively Ghost Problem: The Haunted Art Tower." *The San Francisco Chronicle.* June 25, 1963.

[2] I haven't yet figured out what, if anything, the tower was used for before that. The blueprints show a water tank in the top room, an empty middle room, and a bottom room labeled BEDROOM, with a closet and tiny bathroom in one corner. Early correspondence confirms that this was more or less the original plan—a 1927 letter from then-president Walter S. Martin to the architects of the brand new building asks why the heating system doesn't extend up into the tower rooms, which were "intended to be used either as Rest Rooms for the faculty, or as quarters for the janitors or porters." Maybe unsurprisingly, the answer was



Original Tower Lower Room Blueprints

encountered the ghost on his very first night sleeping up there. This is how he explained it to the *Chronicle*, years later:

It was around midnight, and I had just gone to bed on the third level. I heard the doors opening and closing down below, and, presuming it was my friend, the janitor, I didn't bother to investigate. Then I heard the steps coming up to my floor. The door to my room opened and closed as if someone had entered. It was a large chamber, well illuminated, and in it was just a water tank, my bedroll, and myself. There was no one there.

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budget-related. The architects responded that "[t]he building was constructed under the Cost-plus plan and economy was apparently the watch word at the time. In the interest of economy this heating was left out entirely." They then suggest an electric space heater ("The Majestic type is probably the best of the lot."). For this or whatever reason, it seems that the tower wasn't actually converted into living quarters until Morehouse worked on the project in the '40s. Today you can still the see evidence of the tower's former life as a residence, with pipes that once were used for plumbing poking up through the floor and a mirrored cabinet mounted on a wall where a sink would have been.

The footsteps went through the room and back to the door. The knob turned, the door opened and closed again, and the footsteps continued up to the observation platform. [3]

Morehouse managed to stick it out, but "nailed his door shut for the remainder of the night." (Debatable how much of a deterrent that would be for a ghost?)

Additional reports of paranormal activity came from other students and staff around this time, particularly those who had reason to be in the building at night. Faculty member Wally Hedrick was working late when he heard "all the tools go on downstairs in the sculpture studio. Hurrying down to investigate, he found no one." Hayward King was SFAI's Evening Registrar, a job which included walking around and turning off all the lights before closing the building at the end of the day. According to Hayward, "just before going out we'd turn and look back. Often we'd find that one or two lights were on again in the empty building. Of course, you could say that we'd missed those lights or there was a short in the electricity. You could say a lot of things..."[4]

The tower continued to be used as a weird, chilly, apartment through at least the early 1960s,[5] perhaps one reason why this seems to have been such a well-haunted era. Student Bob Hudson had taken on the night watchman gig in 1962, and recalled sitting outside, eating a sandwich, "when I looked up [at the tower] and saw a woman standing in the arches at the top wearing a baby blue dress." Hudson hurried to the tower and raced up the stairs, but no one was there.[6]

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[3] Sullivan, Gail. "How About a Ghost Story?" *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle.* January 9, 1972.

[4] Ibid.

[5] A woman once came into the library and told me she had had a fling way back in the day with a man who had lived in the tower. And then a number of years later, the same

Allen's P.C.B. Est. 1888
1228
The ghost that has come to life again resides in the San Francisco Art Institute tower
A Ghost of a Legend Haunts the Artists

San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 31, 1968

One question that emerges from all of these ghost stories: What kind of a ghost are we talking about here? Does the ghost have a gender, a temperament, a method to or motivation for its haunting? Bill Morehouse and his friends concluded for whatever reason that the spirit was male and "mischievous but fundamentally benign," but in the late '60s, as construction was underway for the building expansion, the stories took a darker turn. Perhaps the

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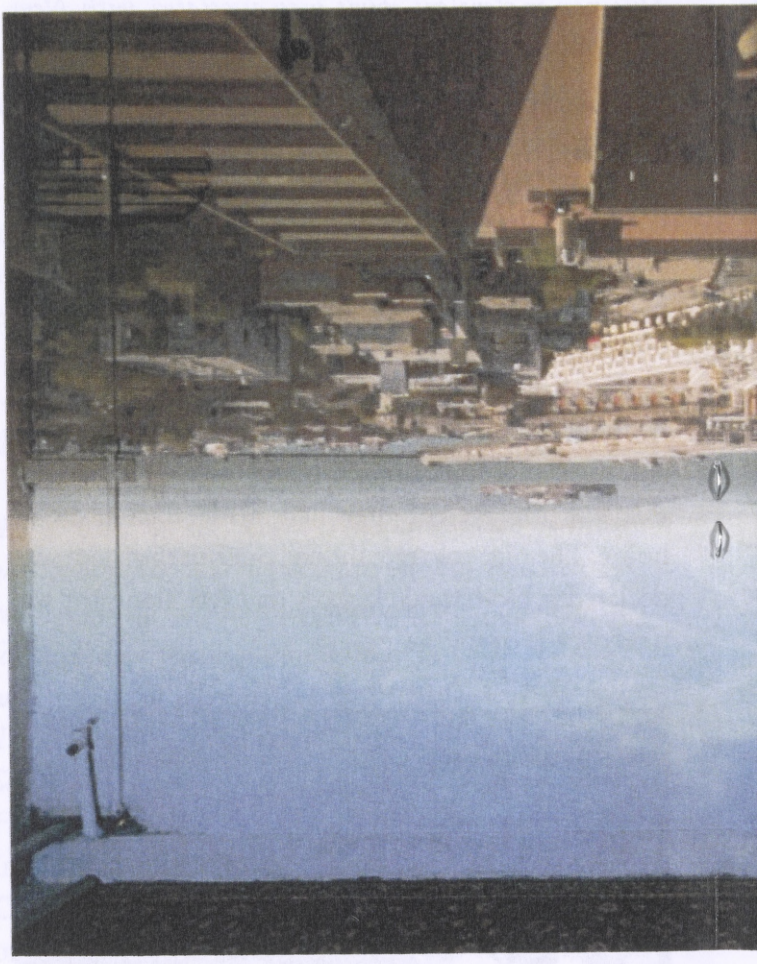
thing happened to my old coworker, Julian. The same woman? Or a whole different woman, a whole different tower fling? I'm still kicking myself for all the questions about all of this that I failed to ask at the time.

[6] "Art Institute Puts Ghost to Work." *The San Francisco Chronicle.* October 30, 1976.

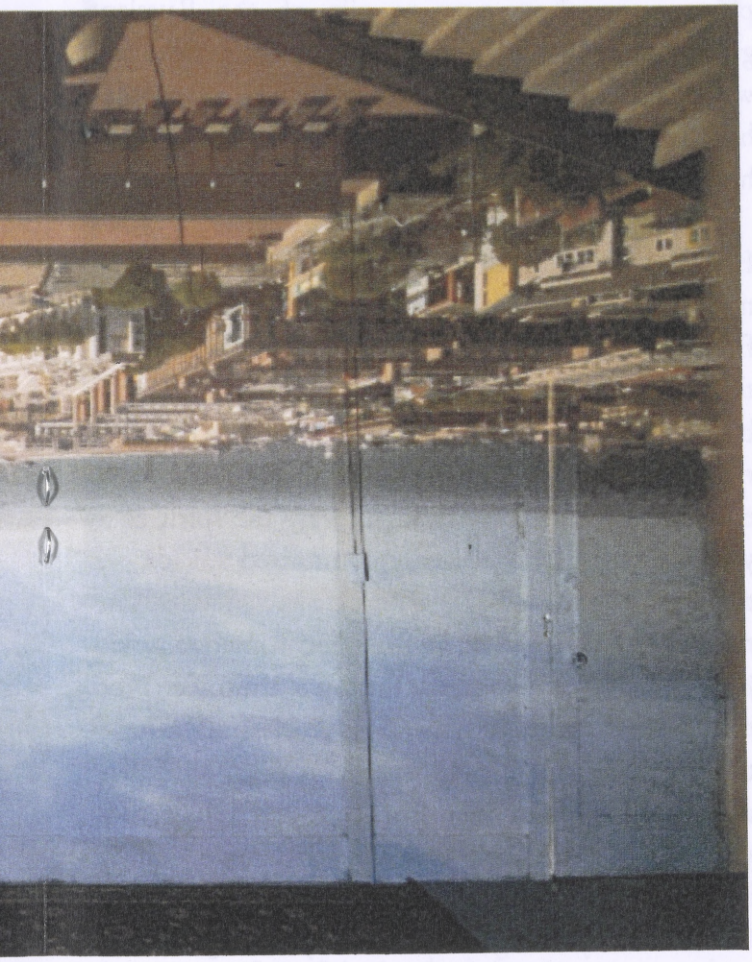
I had started working at SFAI by the time the top room of the tower was finally opened up again and cleared out. The library staff went in before it all got trashed to see if there were any documents worth salvaging. I wish I had taken pictures of how the room look then. At some point a loft had been installed for added storage, and both levels were full of boxes and



Tower Camera Obscura, photographed by Brian Fulda

stacks of paper that had been sitting there for years, untouched by people (and really, as far as I could see, not very touched by pigeons either), but gently dripped upon by the water that leaked in through the ceiling whenever it rained. The leaks had slowly saturated the boxes and the boxes had slowly fallen apart, releasing cascades of paper that gently fanned out as they fell and then stayed that way, in perfect, otherworldly formations. That top room stayed empty for a long time after the big cleanout, and in

2015 instructor Thor Anderson and his students took advantage of its emptiness by turning it into a giant camera obscura, covering the windows completely except for one ¼ inch opening. As your eyes adjusted to the darkness, a view of the outside world came into focus on the walls—silent, upside down, a phantom city with tiny blurs of people and cars passing through.



SFAI's ghost has made it onto various "Haunted San Francisco" lists, so of course ghost hunters show up from time to time. Some came by in 2008 that I don't particularly remember, and others came in 2012 that I do—they set up shop up in the tower's top room for a few hours, bringing along their ghost-detection equipment and a bottle of vodka which they opened up in order to attract the perhaps-Russian ghosts of Russian Hill. They went so far as to play Russian folk

music for these theoretical Russian ghosts (although they also played some Queen—covering the bases). I have heard the rumor—but so far have seen no evidence—that the land the school sits on was once a graveyard. And apparently a Gold Rush-era Russian graveyard did give Russian Hill its name, but the general consensus is that it was likely six blocks away, north of Vallejo between Taylor and Jones. There's a plaque over there now—a gift of the Russian government(!)—stating this, at any rate. I'm not sure why that particular handful of Russian ghosts would have felt the need to trek over to SFAI to do their haunting.

But even if the death and sorrow that you suspect might be lurking in a place turns out to be lurking a fifteen minute walk away, maybe it doesn't matter—the world has plenty of sorrow to go around, and every building has seen its share. In 1985, some SFAI faculty members told the *Bay Guardian* that they'd encountered what they thought was "the spirit of a young woman who allegedly committed suicide on the tower steps long ago."[9] I've heard variations of this myself, including the rumor that someone once jumped from the platform at the top of the tower. Not true, but you can see how those stories might have taken root considering other things that *are* true: that a former SFAI president once committed suicide, that years ago a student (perhaps accidentally) hung himself in Studio 8.[10] There's something fundamentally strange about the way a thing like that can occur in a place and leave no trace. Though I don't believe in ghosts myself, I do appreciate the work they

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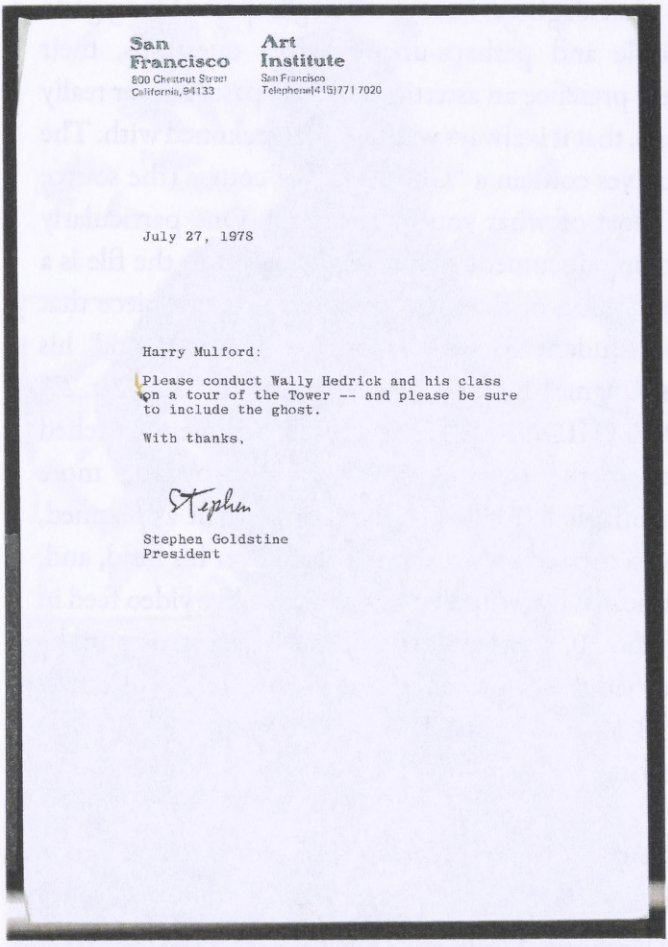
[9] Weisang, Myriam. "Hearts for Art's Sake: A Profile of the San Francisco Art Institute and its second annual Artists' Valentines Exhibition/Auction." *The San Francisco Bay Guardian.* February 6, 1985.

[10] This strange and terrible story crops up in *Reflections from a Cinematic Cesspool,* a very funny and wild sort of book written by the filmmaker George Kuchar, who taught at SFAI for 40 years, up until 2011, the year of his death. George taught in Studio 8, and the films his classes put together over the course of the semester were invariably



San Francisco Art Institute
800 Chestnut Street
California, 94133
San Francisco
Telephone(415)771 7020

July 27, 1978

Harry Mulford:

Please conduct Wally Hedrick and his class on a tour of the Tower -- and please be sure to include the ghost.

With thanks,

Stephen

Stephen Goldstine
President

Letter to Archivist Harry Mulford from President Stephen Goldstine

do, the message they send forward from the past: *something happened here.*

Lately the archival storage that had previously taken over the bottom two rooms of the tower has crept up into the top room as well, so now at a bare minimum the tower is full of the kind of ghostly presences that lurk in the pages of old letters and documents, giving

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awash in wigs and disguises and weird makeup and jury-rigged sets. George came into the studio to set up for class and saw what he took to be a dummy dressed up in clothes from the prop closet hanging from the lighting grid. He was so used to that kind of thing that it took him a while to realize that it wasn't. Librarian Charles Stephanian was also on campus that morning, and went to see what was going on. What Charles saw led him to believe it was that it was an accidental death—auto-erotic asphyxiation gone awry. In his book George doesn't weigh in one way or the other.

us what all ghosts have to offer: glimpses of long-gone people and perhaps-unanswerable questions, their mere presence an assertion that the past is never really gone, that it is always waiting to be reckoned with. The archives contain a "Ghost File" of course (the source of most of what you've just read). One particularly striking document that made its way into the file is a description of the plan for a performance piece that then-student Richard Irwin (or "Irwin-Irwin," his stage name) intended to carry out on October 27, 1978. (MIDNIGHT was written and then scratched out as the starting time, replaced by the more reasonable 8:00 PM). Assuming all went as planned, Irwin dressed in black, put a cloth over his head, and, witnessed by an audience watching a live video feed in Studio 10, crawled slowly up the tower steps until he reached the top where a Ouija board and a thin sheet of 8 ½ x 11" glass hanging from the ceiling were waiting:

Sitting on the floor, placing my hands on Ouija board, I ask "is there a spirit present." If the answer is "no" or "yes" I respond accordingly. If I receive no contact I end the piece by breaking the sheet of glass against my forehead. If contact is established, upon satisfaction that this activity is completed the act of breaking the glass nevertheless transpires.

And then:

Performance ends after I have broken the glass and proclaim:

"WE ARE IN THE TOWER
THE TOWER IS IN US"

Was contact established? I looked through the rest of the Ghost File as well as the file devoted specifically to Richard Irwin, but the archives are silent on this point. And maybe someone who was there that night remembers, and maybe no one does. Sadly, Richard himself can't tell us—he died of AIDS in 1989. Wondering about him, poking around online, I found

Richard Irwin, Photographed by Ginny Lloyd

something written last August by a woman named Rebecca LaFontaine-Larivee. Rebecca met and dated Richard when he was 36, only a handful of years before he died. He was still living in San Francisco then, working as a groundskeeper at the Palace of Fine Arts back when it was home to the Exploratorium, listening to the fog horns at night, watching films at the Roxie, still performing, performing even after he got sick. Rebecca held onto Richard's coat after he died. She held onto it for 30 years. And then she gave it away:

As I drove home, my chest tightened and I began to cry. A grief overcame me that had been absent since that distant time in 1989 when Richard folded his arms over his chest – silently asking permission to die. My hands shook on the steering wheel as I drove back to Corrales and I considered going back to the store to retrieve the coat. I practiced the speech I would make to the store manager: "Sorry ma'am, I've made a mistake leaving that. I promise I will pay you for the inconvenience." Instead, I came home to my apartment, burned a log on the fire, and made myself some tea. I also watched the sun go down on the Sandia Mountains, giving them the "watermelon" hue that they are named for. Friends lost and times past darted through my mind as I mourned the rich exuberance of youth. Then as the moment passed and calmness settled in, I began to question how a scrap of cloth could bring back a life or how its absence could erase a memory. I pictured Richard as I will always see him from a photograph I had taken in Golden Gate Park. He was standing in front of the entrance of a pedestrian tunnel with shadows behind him and cement stalactites hanging down. Wearing a black leather jacket zipped up against the cold, he was trying to look serious as he was gazing at me, but his boyish smirk gave him away. The image had become increasingly faded over the years but I felt this time he'd come to say goodbye.

The essay is easy to find online,[11] at least for now, but I printed it out and stuck it in his file anyway, for you, or someone else, to come across later.

Becky Alexander
The Anne Bremer Memorial Library
April, 2019

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[11] LaFontaine-Larivee, Rebecca. "Richard's Coat: Remembering Richard Irwin." *Empty Mirror.*

https://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/personal-essay/richards-coat (accessed April 10, 2019).